

For immediate release  
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## USIBWC RELEASES FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ON LOWER RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Alternative Vegetation Maintenance Practices for the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project. Written comments about the FEIS will be accepted through January 26, 2004 addressed to:

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Department of the Army, Galveston District, Corps of Engineers  
PO Box 1229  
Galveston, TX 77553-1229

The FEIS covers the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project for 158 miles from Penitas to just downstream of Brownsville, Texas. The purpose of the EIS is to present and analyze the impacts of current and proposed USIBWC vegetation management activities within the United States portions of the project. Pursuant to longstanding agreements with Mexico, both the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission mow and remove vegetation along the Rio Grande in order to maintain the river's capacity to convey flood flows. In addition to fulfilling its agreements with Mexico, the USIBWC must fulfill commitments arising from both a 1990 consent decree, which requires preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement, and a 1993 Biological Opinion of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which led the USIBWC to modify its vegetation maintenance to reduce potential impacts to endangered species. A 2003 Biological Opinion continues the USIBWC commitments.

The USIBWC's vegetation maintenance program is based on the need to:

- Maintain channel banks to provide adequate flood conveyance.
- Equitably divert flood flows into interior floodways.
- Remove brush and other obstructions within floodways.
- Maintain a wildlife corridor.

The FEIS analyzes four alternatives, taking into consideration biological resources, socioeconomic resources and environmental justice, land use, water resources, cultural resources, soil and geology, hazardous materials, air quality and noise. The USIBWC has identified the *No Action Alternative* as the *Preferred Alternative*. This alternative would continue vegetation maintenance practices implemented in conformance with both the 1993 and

2003 Biological Opinions. Under this alternative, vegetation would be maintained on 291 acres.

A Record of Decision selecting an alternative will be issued no earlier than January 26, 2004 --30 days after the FEIS Notice of Availability is published by the Environmental Protection Agency in the Federal Register. The FEIS is currently available on the USIBWC web page, [www.ibwc.state.gov](http://www.ibwc.state.gov).

Copies of the FEIS are also available for inspection and review at the following locations:

Brownsville Public Library  
2600 Central Boulevard  
Brownsville, TX 78520

Harlingen Public Library  
410 '76 Drive  
Harlingen, TX 78550

McAllen Public Library  
601 N. Main Street  
McAllen, TX 78501

Members of the public who would like more information about the FEIS may contact:

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USIBWC  
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